

Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society

Affiliated to the RSGB.

President: Dick Brocks G3WHR

Secretary: Charles Shelton G0GJS

Club Call Sign: G0MWT

Chairman: John Bowen G8DET

Treasurer: Brian Thwaites G3CVI

Newsletter No. 397A

February 1998

The February Meeting

Like it or not, computers are now as much a part of Amateur Radio as other parts of life, to the extent that our Chairman's wife has even suggested a change of name to the "Chelmsford Computer and Amateur Radio Society"! Be that as it may, our **Chairman John G8DET** has organised an interactive computer evening. The idea is to provide an evening of education and interest with a number of computer workstations set up to demonstrate various amateur radio related programs and live demonstrations. It is hoped to demonstrate slowscan TV, circuit analysis, Hostmaster and FX (a machine to machine file transfer program) together with Windows 95, 98 and the RSGB Call Book. You are welcome to bring your own computer to the meeting if you are having problems or wish to demonstrate something of interest. Two of our Members, Jan G7UVP and Murray G6JYB, both professionally engaged with computing, will be on hand to offer advice and help to us all. After the tea-break there will be a question and answer forum. If you have a burning question, write it down and present it to our experts. This will enable them to formulate a considered reply. Have some good 'clean' disks handy as we don't want to have a virus spreading evening! **The meeting will start at 7-30pm at MASC, Beehive Lane on Tuesday 2nd. February.**

If you are not into computers, just come along for a good natter. There are still some Members left who eschew the joys and frustrations of computing. You might even be converted!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Feb 2 CARS Mtg - Amateur Radio Comp. Demo. - MASC.
- Feb 7 South Essex ARS Rally - Paddocks, Long Rd. Canvey.
- Feb 14 Cambridge & DARC Rally - Addenbrookes - C'bridge.
- Apl 20 Aerial erection for IMD - 9-30am - Sandford Mill.
- Apl 24 International Marconi Day - Sandford Mill.

Committee Meeting

The next meeting will be held at Ela G6HKM's QTH on Wednesday 10th February at 7-30pm. You are invited to attend.

Local Nets

The Club Net 2nd Tuesday on 145.325 MHz at 8-30pm.

3rd, 4th and 5th Tuesdays on 28.325 MHz at 8-30pm.

NB. Charles G0GJS will hold a CW QSO on 28.325 MHz for 15 mins prior to the main Net for Members to practice and gain experience.

The "21" Net on 145.525 MHz, as follows:

Each weekday 8.06am to approx. 9-30am (8-30am Wednesdays).

Saturdays 8-30 am to approx. 9.00am.

Sundays 8.06 am to approx. 8.45am

Tom's Top Band Talk on 1.96 MHz, Wednesdays at 8-30 am. to approx. 9-30am.

International Marconi Day

As is customary our Club will be participating in this year's event organised by the Cornish Radio Club. This year Brian G3CVI has agreed to take over as event organiser as well as technical manager. Pat G0SBQ, who has undertaken the event organisation for the last few years, will be taking part but has requested release from official duties. Our thanks to Pat for his past dedication to this event.

Saturday April 24th. is the day! Contact Brian G3CVI (01245-471919) if you would like to join in. You will be very welcome! As usual, the engineering team will assemble at **9-30am on Tuesday 20th. April.** All hands welcome!

The Canvey Rally

Once again CARS has booked a stand at this event. This will be the third year we have flown the flag there. Originally the brainchild of Chris G0IPU and Jan G7UVP, this event has raised useful funds for the Club. It is also a convenient and profitable way to dispose of the left-overs from the November Junk Sale. Now is another chance to clear your shack - XYL's please note! If you have any contributions, bring them along to the next meeting or, better still, come along to the rally itself on **Sunday 7th. February.**

The event is organised by the South Essex ARS, and, quite apart from our stand, it is usually quite a good rally. There is ample parking on site and nearby. Food is available both on site and nearby.

Chris, Jan, Colin TRM and Geoff KLV will be pleased to receive any contributions at the next meeting. Please help boost Club funds. It all helps to keep the Subs. low!

Last Month's Meeting

The Film Night - Carl G3PEM

Having suggested one video for the January meeting, our traditional film evening, I was requested to organise the whole evening. Time passed whilst I awaited the air ticket to Amsterdam from the Committee. A little bird then suggested that it was not that sort of evening! I then proceeded to review the RSGB library list and selected two films which I considered suitable, and I also contacted Fred G6FXM just in case he had some cutting room material not previously seen by CARS. I need not have worried.

The first film on the night was titled "Getting Started in Amateur Satellites" issued by CQ magazine about 1992. The film gave an insight into the technology required to access the Orbital Satellite Carrying Amateur Radio. I learnt for the first time what the acronym [OSCAR] meant, there is hope yet! The video explained the meaning of other terms such as Apogee, Perigee and the various operating modes of transmit and receive frequencies and the effects of transponder conversions. One of the impressions I was left with was, how a King operates. Did those who attended the showing notice that whereas some of the W stations had a covered chip board desk similar to kitchen tops, King Hussein had a mahogany console with leather operating surface? Yes I did recheck the video.

For a short film within the programme I requested Fred to compile some CARS moments. Thanks Fred, you did us proud. The video showed the help given to one of our members, George G3GNQ, in raising his refurbished beam. From the warmth of the viewing room it looked like a cold day. The following sequences showed scenes from two local broadcasting studios, which took me back to the days on the radio ships in the 60's. Technology has certainly moved on, perhaps the days of babbling DJ's may be numbered!

The final film came under the title of "Getting started in DXing", another CQ magazine production. The voice of Marconi was heard in the opening sequence which, for an American based production, was a great beginning! Subject matter within the film was well presented and explanations of the various DXing techniques discussed. Since the presentation I have set various traps around my shack for the DX "bug" but to date have not caught it. Many spiders in the trap however! One thought crossed my mind while viewing this film! The Chelmsford Planning Committee members would have convulsions if they were presented with applications for some of the antenna farms shown in the video. It was also nice to hear once again the maxim, "If the antenna did not fall in last winters gales its not big enough".

Report by Carl G3PEM.

I'm sure all those who came to the Film Night will join me in thanking Carl for providing us with such an interesting evening and, also, for providing this 'write up'. There's nothing like a bit of new blood! Our thanks also to Fred G6FXM for his interesting insight behind the scenes of our local broadcasters. Our thanks to you both. Editor.

Computer Printers - John G8DET

I have bought an Epson Stylus Colour 740. I bought it as it was the cheapest to use on the new Universal Serial Bus (USB). I run 3 printers on my Amstrad 1640 bought in 1987, an Epson LQ850 with cut sheet feeder for quality letters, a Panasonic KX-P1695 for wide carriage printing and a Silver Reed EXP800 (daisy wheel) for label printing. In 10 years I estimate I have

printed well in excess of 15,000 sheets and spent £50 to £60 on ribbons.

With the new printer I have printed off 200 sheets and spent £40 on ink already. I have also been told that since the print head is "inside" the printer, it may have to be replaced in 2 years as it could be worn out - cost £100+. Any comments?

The Hewlett Packard printers appear to have bigger ink cartridges with a print head in each. Every time you replace the cartridge you get a new head. The Epson 740 black cartridge holds 10ml of ink while each colour (3) only hold 5ml. If any one colour runs out the printer will not print!

I am told the HP 720C is a good practical printer. Any comments?

Finally, I would like to pose the question "Did I buy the right printer?"

Printer manufacturers seem to be very coy about stating the ink consumption of their products, or have I missed something? Editor

The Club Library - Geoff G7KLV.

In April 1992, I answered an advertisement in the N/L for a 'strong and young' volunteer to take over the Club library. Whilst possibly answering the former requirement, I certainly didn't fulfil the latter! My services were accepted, probably because I was the only volunteer! However, increasing infirmity is catching up on me and I am looking for an alternative method of conducting the library service, which does not involve lugging a heavy suitcase along to each meeting!

I am proposing to publish a library list which will be displayed on the Club noticeboard, hopefully at the February meeting. Copies will be also be available for retention by Members, if required. Members requiring the loan of books can then contact me at the meetings or at my home. If the request is not urgent, I will bring it along to the next meeting. If it is urgent, I will endeavour to ensure delivery within a reasonable time by some means or other! Members are welcome to browse at my QTH, but ring first!

The library has a wide selection of books on many different aspects of amateur radio and related subjects, some old and others fairly recent. Most of them have been donated by Members. We make a nominal charge of 20 pence per item per month. Unlike the big boys, we don't have a system of fines!

Please use the service, it's provided for your benefit.

My 'phone number is 01245-473822. For my address, see bottom right.

The Role of Portishead Radio and Rugby Radio In Long Distance Maritime Communication

April 1999 - Special Event to Mark the Closure of the World's Largest Maritime Communications Centre.

During 1999 Portishead Radio is to close, bringing to an end 100 years of terrestrial maritime radio history in the United Kingdom. The centenary is quite accurate as it was in 1899 when ships were first regularly fitted with wireless equipment. The story does not start at Portishead but at Poldhu, on the Lizard peninsula, on the SW tip of Cornwall. On 12th December 1901 Gulielmo Marconi received the first transatlantic signal, the letter "S" in Morse code in St. Johns, Newfoundland. It was transmitted from Poldhu; but this was very much long wave communications. It was not until 1916 that Marconi realised that the shorter the wavelength the longer the potential distance.

Various long distance experiments were carried out from Poldhu. In 1923 Marconi travelled extensively on his yacht "Elettra", testing the range of short wave signals. On 30th May 1924 he attempted a speech transmission using a beam aerial at Poldhu to Sydney, Australia - he was successful and this significantly advanced the use of short waves. The first "Marconigram" was sent from Poldhu to Milnerton, near Cape Town, South Africa on 2nd December 1924.

In early 1920 the GPO and Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company agreed to convert an old Imperial Wireless Chain station in Devizes, Wiltshire for long range maritime use with a guaranteed range of 1500 miles. Its call sign was GKT. The cost was just less than one shilling a word (5p today, but it was a lot of money in those days). This was still using short long wave transmissions.

The experiments at Poldhu had proved that the use of short waves was far superior for long distance and so, in 1926, the GPO installed a short wave transmitter at Devizes but it was keyed from their new station at Highbridge, near Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset. Once again this all proved very successful and so another new station was built at Portishead, near Bristol. Portishead Radio commenced operations in 1927. By 1930 there were four short wave transmitters, 60 radio officers handling over 3 million words of radio traffic. It was in 1926 that Rugby Radio GBR started to transmit time signals.

The importance of this transmission cannot be underestimated as it ensures that ships chronometers are accurate. Marine Radio Officers have always taken the time signals daily.

These H.F. facilities were known as "Main" radio stations and were run by the Post Office Engineering Department, Radio Branch, later to become the External Communications Executive.

Wartime saw a decline in traffic but the role of Portishead Radio was crucial to the war effort. Ship stations did not transmit except in emergency but Portishead sent news and reports of enemy sightings. A special aircraft section was established to maintain communications with patrol aircraft in the North Atlantic.

1946 saw the introduction of the "area" scheme, which allowed British and colonial, registered vessels to use naval stations round the world to relay their traffic. This was later termed the "Commonwealth Area Scheme". It enabled ships to clear their traffic rapidly. The area stations in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Hong

Kong, Singapore, India, Mauritius and South Africa made it so much easier to get ones traffic cleared. Ships under the Dutch flag would have to contact PCH Scheveningen Radio wherever they were in the world. This scheme is the basis of the DX award on offer and the certificate will depict the scheme.

While Portishead was the transmitting and receiving station used for maritime purposes there were transmitting sites at Rugby, Leighfield, Ongar, Crigean and Bearley and these stations played a major part in information and safety of life at sea. Weather maps and forecasts would be sent in code together with the daily news and stock market reports, not forgetting the important football results. Rugby was the main centre for these services.

In the 1960's Portishead would be in contact with over 1000 ships each day, 86 operators handling over 11 million words per annum. The scheme ended in 1972 and thereafter UK shipping would have to contact Portishead from wherever they were located. This was made more difficult when one considers that by 1974 traffic and staff levels had doubled over the 15 years.

In the 1950's the telex service became more popular and the 1960's saw a huge increase in the use of the radiotelephone. Calls were booked by contacting Portishead and in the early days a time and frequency was allocated. The telephone terminal at Brent would connect the call through Rugby. There were no operators at Rugby.

Changes in technology and the introduction of computers and satellites have led to a rapid decline in the requirement for such radio stations. Portishead Radio was moved back to Highbridge in 1978; but, of course, it retained its famous name. There are no aeriels at Highbridge and today those at Rugby are used. Morse code becomes less used and the number of ships contacted each day falls to such a level so that the business is no longer viable. The time has arrived when this chapter in radio history is to be closed.

In the days when a ships' crew was away from home for up to two years Portishead was their link with family and friends. The Radio Officers at Portishead and those on board ship were the only real contact with home. Ship Letter Telegrams, gifts and an Interflora service were all available for the crew on board and this meant that birthdays and Christmas were never forgotten. There are many to whom the name Portishead Radio will evoke very fond memories and it will always go down in history as the most famous maritime radio station in the world.

The Radio Officers Association wishes to acknowledge the work done at the various sites of Portishead Radio and have chosen April 1999 to mark the closure of the station. The "area" scheme outlined above has been revived and the amateur bands will have call signs such as ZL2ZLW on air (Wellington Radio). Stations have been arranged from all of the following sites; Halifax, Cape Town, Mauritius, Malta, Vishakhapatnam, Bombay, Hong Kong, Singapore, Darwin, Sydney, Wellington, Vancouver and Awarua on the attached map, which also forms the award for working at least four areas. There will also be stations from the old Royal Navy Area scheme such as Colombo, Rugby Radio and the QE2 will also be there.

This will be a CW event but every opportunity will be given for QRS stations, even if you have never used a key since passing the test, give it a go. The operators will be very patient! Details of the stations and the time they will be on air will be made available through the amateur radio press.

Proceeds from the awards will go to the RNLI and the Mission to Seamen. We think that this will be a unique DX award, which will serve as a tribute to Portishead Radio - GKT, GKL, GKA, GKB, GKC and other call signs. It will also benefit good causes, which also help those who are in the Merchant Navy.

David Barlow G3PLE.

GKA Special Event Manager Radio Officers' Association.

See web site for monthly news :- <http://homepages.enterprise.net/dbarlow>

"Pine", Churchtown, Cury, Nr. HELSTON, Cornwall TR12 7BW

NO phone calls please.

Editor's Notes - Geoff G7KLV

Once again we are indebted to Charles G0GJS for obtaining permission to print the above article from the Radio Officers Association Newsletter. As you will have noted it is on a more serious subject than his last offering! Incidentally, he wishes it to be known that he had no connection with Marconi Marine whatsoever!

There is a further instalment from the ROA Newsletter next month. This will deal with the maritime coast stations in general. Further details will also be given of the Special Event on 10th & 11th April. For further details contact G3PLE. We have a copy of the map referred to above.

Publishing these ROA articles has meant that we are holding over articles provided by Club Members. We have one by Colin GOTRM on his experiences in learning Morse, with lots of good advice and do's and don't's, next month.

We will also be arm-twisting Geoff G2AMQ to get an up-date on his computer construction saga, which has not been without its problems!

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Ela G6HKM

Deadline for the next News Letter is Thursday 25th. March